

REMARKS

Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of this application in view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks.

Claims 1-78 are pending. Pursuant to a previous election made by Applicants, claims 8-36, 44-72, 74, 75, 77 and 78 were withdrawn from consideration. Claims 1, 2, 37, 38, 73 and 76 were rejected. Claims 3-7 and 39-43 were indicated as being drawn to allowable subject matter, but are objected to for depending from a rejected base claim.

By this amendment, claims 1, 2, 37 and 38 are canceled without prejudice or disclaimer and claims 3, 39, 73 and 76 have been amended, as shown above. Applicants have also amended the title. Entry of this amendment is respectfully requested. No new matter has been added.

Information Disclosure Statement

In reviewing the file, Applicants have not been able to locate an initialed PTO 1449 form from the Information Disclosure Statement filed on March 19, 2004. Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to consider the Information Disclosure Statement filed March 19, 2004 and return an initialed copy of the PTO 1449 form. A courtesy copy of the PTO 1449 form is attached.

Claim Objections

Claim 76 was objected to because of the stated informalities. (See Office Action, p. 2, ¶ 3.) Applicants have amended claim 76 to overcome the alleged informalities.

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. § 112

Claims 1-7 and 37-43 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, first paragraph, as failing to comply with the written description requirement. Specifically, the Office Action states that an added element in claims 1 and 37 has no support in the specification as originally filed. (See Office Action, p. 3, ¶ 5).

Claims 1, 2, 37 and 38 are canceled without prejudice or disclaimer and claims 3 and 39 are rewritten in independent form to recite the elements of original claims 1 and 37, respectively. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the rejections to these claims be withdrawn.

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. § 101

Claim 76 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 101 as failing to “provide a practical application (i.e., physical transformation or produce a useful, tangible, concrete result).” (See Office Action, p. 3, ¶ 6)

Applicants have herein amended claim 76, respectfully request reconsideration and submit that the rejections to this claim be withdrawn as having been overcome.

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 1, 37, 73 and 76 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,331,442 to Sorimachi (“Sorimachi”) in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,377,711 to Morgana (“Morgana”) further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,958772 to Sugimori (“Sugimori”). Claims 2 and 38 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Sorimachi in view of Morgana and Sugimori further in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,874,988 to Gu (“Gu”).

Claims 1, 2, 37 and 38 are canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the rejections to these claims be withdrawn.

Claim 73 is amended to depend from claim 3, which was indicated as being drawn to allowable subject matter. Claim 76 is amended to recite features similar to claim 39, which was indicated as being drawn to allowable subject matter. Accordingly, for at least these reasons, Applicants respectfully submit that amended claims 73 and 76 are believed allowable.

Reply to Office Action dated September 7, 2006

Applicants have chosen in the interest of expediting prosecution of this patent application to distinguish the cited documents from the pending claims as set forth above. These statements should not be regarded in any way as admissions that the cited documents are, in fact, prior art. Likewise, Applicants have not specifically addressed the rejections of the dependent claims and respectfully submit that the independent claims, from which they depend, are in condition for allowance as set forth above. Accordingly, the dependent claims also are in condition for allowance for at least similar reasons. Applicants, however, reserve the right to address such rejections of the dependent claims in the future as appropriate.

CONCLUSION

For the above-stated reasons, this application is respectfully asserted to be in condition for allowance. An early and favorable examination on the merits is requested. In the event that a telephone conference would facilitate the examination of this application in any way, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the number provided.

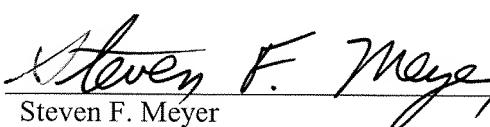
AUTHORIZATION

Should an extension of time be necessary to render this filing timely, such extension is hereby petitioned and the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any fees, or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. **13-4500**, Order No. 1232-4727.

Respectfully submitted,
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Dated: October 9, 2006

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